



Executive Summary

Upper Valley Teaching Place Collaborative (UVTPC) Teacher Practice (aka Groundhog Day) Survey, 2016-17

Introduction

The Upper Valley Teaching Place Collaborative is a group of five providers of Place-based Ecology Education (PBEE) professional development (PD) programs that began meeting in 2015 for the purpose of increasing the quality, capacity, coordination, collaboration, and accessibility of PBEE PD offerings in the Upper Valley (UV) region. The five partner projects/organizations include:

- FFEC - Forest for Every Classroom
- UVLEL - Upper Valley Linkages for Environmental Literacy
- VINS - Vermont Institute of Natural Science Center for Environmental Education
- UVFTS - Upper Valley Farm to School/Vital Communities
- WI - Wellborn Institute

This report¹ highlights the most potent findings and recommendations from administering a recently developed survey tool. The survey is intended to provide longitudinal tracking of classroom teacher implementation of PBEE core practices in the region, as well as to inform refinements to PBEE PD. Analyses reported here are based on combined responses from Spring 2017 and the Spring 2016 pilot for a total usable N of 103. Contact UVTPC staff for further details and appendices presented in an Outline of Preliminary Findings internal report.

Highlight #1: UVTPC survey respondents reported clear, statistically significant, medium-sized changes in PBEE teaching practices over the past year.

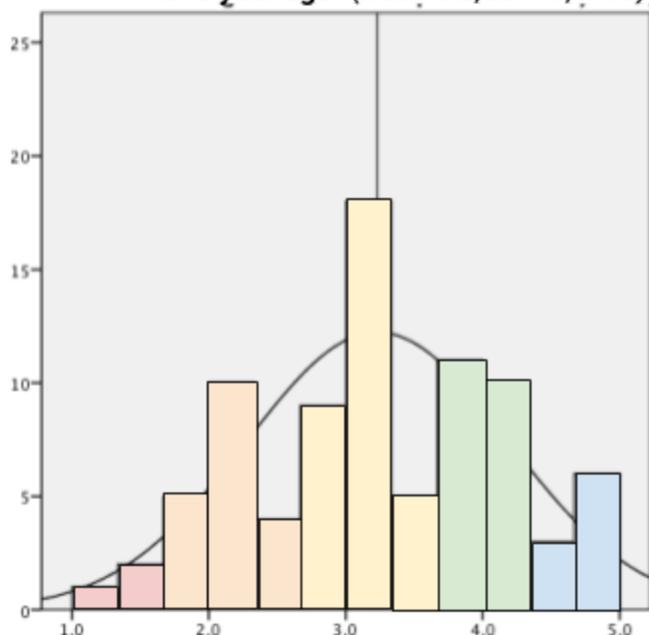
- **For six PBEE core practices, educators reported their Stage of Change on a five point scale**
 - Using the area immediately around the school and other community locations as places for learning.
 - Collaborating with local organizations and community members for planning and teaching.
 - Collaborating with fellow teachers to make our teaching more place-based.
 - Adapting my day to day teaching choices, language, and cultural references to incorporate locally relevant content.
 - Adapting standardized curriculum to make it more locally relevant.
 - Using locally relevant content to anchor interdisciplinary curriculum units or overarching learning themes.
- **On average, respondents moved from the “Designing” stage to the “Doing” stage**
 - The observed changes of approximately a half of a standard deviation were consistent and impressive.
 - Four of the six PBEE core practices were moderately statistically associated with the amount of PD a respondent received. Other factors besides PBEE PD were likely also contributing to the reported changes in practice from one year ago to now.

¹ Suggested citation: PEER Associates, Duffin, M., & Cowles, E. (2017). Executive Summary, Upper Valley Teaching Place Collaborative (UVTPC) Teacher Practice (aka Groundhog Day) Survey, 2016-17. Downloaded from PEERassociates.net.

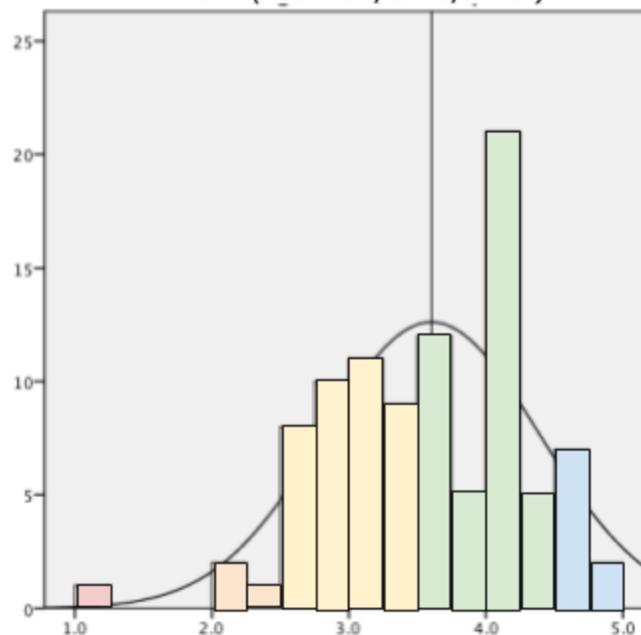


Average of Six PBEE Core Practices, UVTPC, Spring 2016 and Spring 2017

"One year ago" (mean= 3.2, SD=1.0, N=88)



"Now" (mean= 3.6, SD=.8, N=100)



| 1 - DISINTEREST | 2 - DELIBERATION | 3 - DESIGNING | 4 - DOING | 5 - DEEPENING |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Not necessarily opposed to making this part of my teaching practice, but not intending to change soon. | Thinking about making this part of my teaching practice, perhaps unsure about costs versus benefits. | Actively preparing to make this part of my teaching practice soon, feeling fairly convinced. | This is my regular teaching practice. | This has been my normal, automatic teaching practice for a long while, I'm seen as an enthusiastic "champion." |

Highlight #2: Optimal PBEE PD provides ongoing personalized instruction & support

- Providing concrete, transferable examples was very helpful for PD recipients.
- Helping teachers use PBEE to address standardized curricular frameworks was high leverage.
- UVTPC should consider tailoring PBEE PD activities and program design to teachers at different Stages of Change in order to support the widest possible range of teachers.

Highlight #3: Open-ended survey items provided diverse, useful, formative insights

Program staff identified quotes that helped guide their thinking about issues such as making the case for PBEE and teacher challenges to which PBEE programs should adapt, among others. For example:

- *"It's all about engagement. PBEE engages students. It is hands on and relevant. Teachers are always looking for that 'hook' that will engage all their students. PBEE is that hook!"*
- *"PBEE doesn't strike me as either an addition or a choice. I see it as a framework for teaching content in a way that is more relevant and engaging for students."*
- *"Just as students learn through repeated exposure to information and opportunities for inquiry, so do educators. We need time and support to try out new strategies."*
- *"[Time is a challenge], I always feel as though I am trying to fit 10 pounds of sand in a 5 pound bag."*
- *"Allow educators the opportunity to start 'small.'"*
- *"I saw my students collaborating on meaningful work in a way they don't when it's just 'stuff to get done.'"*
- *"Wellborn has charged my batteries and drives me to be a better teacher."*